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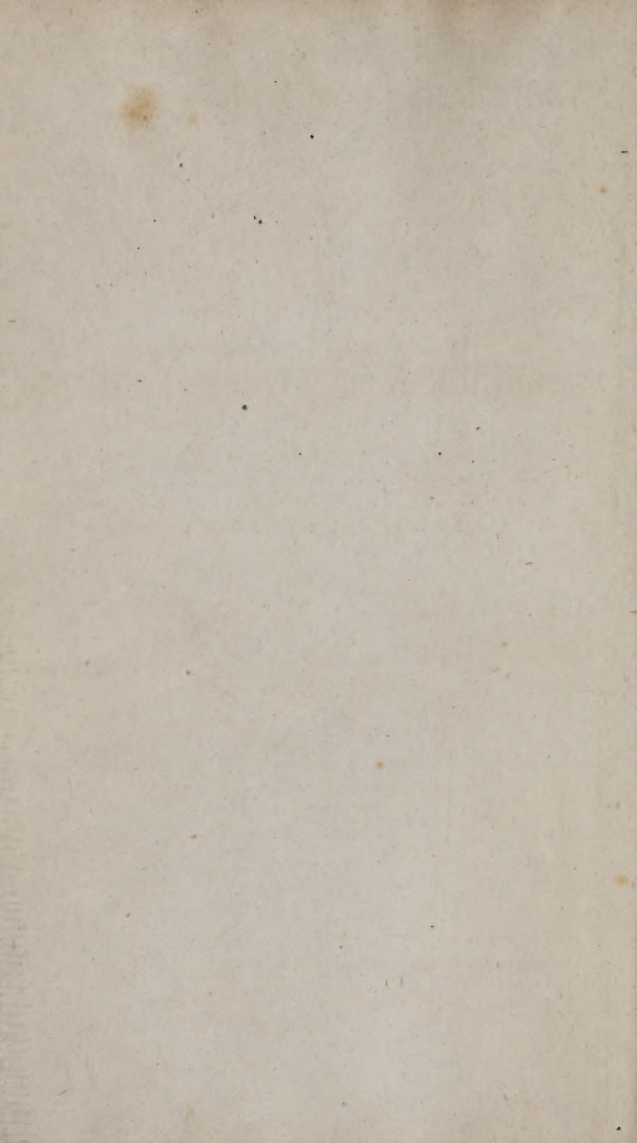
LETTER

TO THE REV. OF FROGS PARISH

BOSTON

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LETTERS

TO THE

CHILDREN OF PIOUS PARENTS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "PARENTAL TRAINING."

By
Charles Byde.

*Written for the Massachusetts Sabbath School Society, and
approved by the Committee of Publication.*



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James Waldo, M.D.,
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P R E F A C E.

THESE Letters, though addressed to the children of pious parents, are not intended exclusively for the *young*. The author has, indeed, endeavored to make them so plain that a child can understand them; but many of the arguments and motives presented are equally adapted to the descendants of pious parents of every age. And it is earnestly hoped that many who have passed the season of childhood and youth, will honor them with a perusal, and seriously ponder their suggestions.

The Author has supposed himself addressing those who have been blessed with both pious father and mother. But this is far from being the case with all the children of the covenant. If, however, one parent only is a disciple of the Saviour, especially if this one be the mother, the arguments here used lose none of their force. The very defects of one parent have often stimulated the other to greater faithfulness. The example, counsels and prayers of many a pious mother have resulted in the salvation of her children, and have gone down as a precious legacy to children's children.

To all therefore whom God has blessed with pious father, or mother, as well as those whose parents are both numbered among the saints, these letters are affectionately and with earnest solicitude directed.

May that gracious Being who is pleased to use the feeblest instrumentalities in accomplishing his most glorious purposes, make them the means of life and salvation to many a precious soul.

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LETTERS TO CHILDREN.

LETTER I.

WHY THE CHILDREN OF PIOUS PARENTS ARE
ESPECIALLY ADDRESSED.

My Dear Young Friends:—

On no other class of children in this world, does the eye of God look down with so much interest, so much tenderness and love, as upon yourselves.

He makes but little of all other distinctions of birth. The children of rank, of wealth, of fame, however they may glory in their descent, and be honored by the world, are regarded with no special favor by him.

But the children of piety, the descendants of his own beloved people, are precious

in his sight and the objects of a most affectionate solicitude.

It is probable that none of you have fully realized the high honor and blessed privilege which God has conferred upon you in causing you to be the children of pious parents. As such, you sustain relations to God and to the church of Christ, which no other children on earth sustain: and as God has so peculiarly distinguished you, he desires and expects that you should manifest a correspondent conduct—that you should return love for love—that you should highly prize and truly and faithfully improve your advantages—that you should grow up in his service, honor him in all your life, and thus be happy here, and happy forever in heaven.

He has therefore given you his commands, invitations, promises, and abundant means of grace. He sends upon you, especial influences to restrain you from sin, and to draw you to himself. No other class of children enjoy such privileges as yours.

And there is no other class of persons whose condition, character and prospects awaken so deep an interest in the breasts of Christians. They desire your salvation with peculiar earnestness. They pray for you more frequently and fervently than for the children of wicked parents. They think there is more hope of your salvation. Other children may possibly be saved, but they expect believers to be added to the Lord principally from your ranks. To you they look, for the living stones that are to be wrought into the spiritual temple. *They* must soon die. Their labors for God on earth must soon cease, and they confidently hope, that when they are gone to their rest, you will rise up to sustain the institutions of piety which they leave, and to carry forward the works of benevolence which they have begun.

These circumstances of your being, create obligations such as rest upon no other class of children ; obligations which cannot be fulfilled without a careful study of your duties, and earnest and persevering efforts.

Peculiarly great will be your guilt, and fearfully aggravated will be your condemnation, if you refuse to be the servants of God.

There is therefore a propriety in my addressing these letters to *you*. With solemn emphasis, I may say to you as David said to Solomon in his dying charge; "Know thou the God of *thy father*, and serve him with a perfect heart and willing mind; if thou seek him he will be found of thee, but if thou forsake him he will cast thee off forever." I could indeed say much to the children of irreligious parents. I could urge very weighty reasons why *they* should give themselves to God; but I could not bring so many arguments, nor present such powerful motives to their minds as I can to yours.

Will you not listen to me seriously and candidly? The subjects on which I shall address you are eminently serious. They are of the highest importance to you. They take hold of your eternal interests. The manner in which you shall treat them

will affect your everlasting destiny, for happiness or misery. O, then, before you go any further, breathe out one prayer to God, that the reading of this little book may be made a blessing to your soul ; that it may enlighten you in the knowledge of your duty—may impress more deeply your obligations, and confirm you in the purpose of *everlasting devotement* to God.

LETTER II.

OUTLINE OF DUTY.

My Young Friends:—

The first and constant question of every intelligent creature should be, “What does the Lord my God require of me?” “What is the service which he demands?” This, whatever it may be, comprises his whole duty and interest, his honor and happiness; for infinite wisdom cannot err, and infinite goodness will not deceive. The answer to this question I will endeavor to give you in the present letter. My limits, however, will allow me only to lay down a few principles; to present a brief outline of the character which God approves. The full delineation would require a volume rather than a letter.

1. In the first place, God requires you to *love* him. It is not enough that you do

not hate him. Indifference here is crime. It is not enough to treat him with cold and distant respect. It is not enough to admire his infinite skill and sublime power, as the Great Architect of nature. He requires you to feel towards him all the warmth of a sincere love. The command is, "Thou shalt *love* the Lord thy God."

This command needs but little explanation. Love to God, you cannot but know, is complacency or delight in his character. This must extend to his *whole* character; to his holiness as well as his goodness, to his justice as well as his mercy. Indeed all his moral attributes are so many modifications of love, and all combine to render him perfectly and infinitely lovely.

The love which God requires of you, includes gratitude, which is love awakened by his special goodness to you; a warm and affectionate remembrance of the blessings of his hand. It includes, also, a benevolent regard to his interests—a sincere desire that all his plans and purposes may be fulfilled,—and delight in his perfect and

everlasting blessings. This love must be supreme. You may love your parents, your brothers and sisters and friends, but God must have the first place in your hearts. The command is, "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul and with all thy strength.*"

The command of course includes all suitable expressions and manifestations of this love. Those whom you love are much in your thoughts. It is no task, it requires no effort to think of them: your thoughts naturally, easily, and delightfully dwell upon their persons and character. You feel a deep interest in every thing that reminds you of them. You feel a peculiar delight in whatever develops their character, or resembles them. You desire their company, you value greatly every token of their regard. Their smiles make you happy; you love to please them. You need no higher motive to comply with their wishes than the pleasure of doing it.

Such is the love which you must feel and manifest towards your heavenly Fath-

er. He must be the object of your frequent and delightful contemplation. His presence and favor you must desire, as the greatest of all blessings. You must love his word and his ordinances as the means of revealing his character, and as the medium of communication with him, and his people for the resemblance, though faint, which they bear to him. To please him, must be your first business and highest delight.

Perhaps it may seem difficult to you to love an invisible being, but there is no real difficulty in the case, if the heart is right. You do not see the earthly friend whom you love. You see only the body: the soul is the true object of love. It is the pure virtue, the noble and generous dispositions, the warm affections;—in a word the *character* of your friend that awakens your love: without this, you would soon lose your interest in all that is external. A beautiful body enclosing a base and wicked soul, speedily becomes an object of disgust.

Now can you not as easily understand

and love the character of God? "He has not left himself without witness. The heavens declare the glory of God," and "the earth is full of the riches of his goodness." Everywhere you see the mementos of his being and presence. Though invisible he is ever nearer to you than any earthly friend. From him all your blessings flow, "In him" you "live and move and have your being." In his word especially, his character is drawn out in all its loveliness, and spread before you in a great variety of aspects; where, then, is the difficulty in loving him? Others have loved him,—"I love the Lord," said an ancient saint, "because he hath heard my voice and my supplications," and later saints have said, "We love him because he first loved us." And you may love him, and must love him, or you can never be a Christian, never be a child of God, never mingle in the services of heaven.

2. God requires you to *worship* him. Worship is the ascription to God of those attributes which belong to his nature. It

includes adoration, praise, and thanksgiving; and in creatures situated as we are, it embraces confession and supplication.

The unbeliever may tell you that God is too high to be affected by our praise or to be moved by our supplications; but it is enough to know that he himself has said, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." "Who-so offereth praise glorifieth me." "Call upon me in the day of trouble." "Seek ye me and live." Whatever lovely traits of character you may possess in the view of your fellow men, whatever principles of integrity and honor may control you in your earthly pursuits and relations, if you live without prayer, if God is not acknowledged in all your ways, your character is radically defective in his sight. You are a rebel against his throne—you are an enemy to the peace and order of the universe.

God requires you to worship him in public and in private. As a member of society, you are to honor him by uniting with your fellow men in the prayers and

praises of the sanctuary. As an individual you are to enter your closet and pray to your Father who is in secret: and this must be done daily. The very language of the prayer given us by our Saviour, "Give us this day our daily bread" implies that no day must pass without this acknowledgment of God; and surely the direction, "Pray without ceasing," and "In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God," can mean no less.

3. You are to serve God *by promoting his interests*, by coöperating with him in those works of benevolence and mercy which he is carrying forward in our world. These respect the purity and enlargement of the church, the salvation of sinners, and the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom over the whole earth. God has wisely and kindly purposed to secure these great objects by the instrumentality of his creatures. He gives them this honor, he lays upon them this responsibility. The way

in which each individual is to labor must depend upon circumstances. Some may give themselves directly and exclusively to this work, as ministers of the gospel, or missionaries to the heathen. Others may labor in a more private way with individuals, or may contribute of their substance for the support of religious institutions and pious and benevolent enterprises. All can do something.

4. The service which God requires of you is sometimes expressed by *glorifying* him. You cannot indeed add any thing to his essential glory. You cannot make him greater, holier, better than he is, but you may make his glory known. You may express your sense of his greatness and excellence, and you may be the means of inducing others to admire and praise him too. Thus you may glorify him. And this you are to do continually. It must be the great object for which you live. The command is, "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." In reference to this, all your plans

must be adopted, all your connections formed, all your pleasures and business pursued, for "man's chief end is to glorify God, and enjoy him forever."

5. It is part of your duty to God to *love your fellow men*. The second great command is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." You are to feel and manifest a kind and disinterested regard to all men.—To the vile and wicked as well as to the good. You are to compassionate them in distress, to relieve their wants, and promote their happiness, so far as may be consistent with other specific duties. You are to love your enemies as well as your friends, and those that are far off whom you have never seen, as well as those that are near. You are, especially, to pity the ignorant and deluded, upon whose dark minds, the light of the blessed gospel has never shone, and according to your ability, to aid in sending it to them.

But your first duty is undoubtedly at home. You are to manifest a special love to your kindred. Your brothers and sis-

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ters must ever be the objects of a strong and tender affection, and you must labor with unceasing assiduity to diffuse over the domestic circle, of which you form a part, a pure and serene happiness.

You are in a very peculiar manner to honor your parents. "Honor thy father and thy mother that it may be well with thee and that thou mayest live long in the earth." You are to honor them by an affectionate esteem of their persons, by a tender regard for their wishes, their feelings, their interests and their comfort. In all lawful ways you are to seek their welfare and their happiness.

You are required to obey them. By the wise appointment of God, they are placed over you with authority to command. You cannot disobey them without rebellion against God.

As your parents also, who have watched over you with unceasing kindness from your earliest moments, who have supplied your wants, and have ever been planning and laboring for your usefulness and hap-

piness, they have the most righteous claim to your obedience, and it should never be withholden. Wait not for an explicit command; let the gentlest expression of their wishes be sufficient to secure your prompt and cheerful obedience.

6. Your duty to God also requires you *to maintain a watchful care over all your appetites and passions.* The irregular or excessive indulgence of any of these is very offensive to him, and must utterly unfit you for his service. You are therefore to be temperate in all things, chaste, meek, humble, patient, and forbearing, denying yourselves every thing unwholesome or injurious, “keeping under the body,” and “crucifying the flesh, with the affections and lusts thereof.”

7. But I must not forget that you belong to a sinful race, and that personally, you have already failed to keep these requirements of God. You are doubtless conscious to yourselves, that you have often disobeyed him. If *you* are not sensible of it *he* knows it, and therefore requires

you *to repent*. With ingenuous sorrow and shame you must mourn over your sins, and in your heart and purpose forever renounce them. This sincere grief for having sinned against God, must form no small part of your religion so long as you remain on earth.

8. I add, only, that God requires of you *faith in the Lord Jesus Christ*. Having broken his laws, repentance alone cannot save you. It cannot atone for the past nor repair the injury done to the moral kingdom of God. Justice must be honored,—the law must be satisfied before the sinner can be forgiven. God, therefore, in his infinite wisdom and mercy has provided a Saviour. He “so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” And now he commands all men to honor the Son, to believe in him, to trust in him, to submit to him. In him is not only all your hope for pardon, but all your strength for duty: “without him you can do nothing.” Faith

brings before you effectively, all the objects of love, brings you into vital union with Christ, secures for you the influences of the Spirit. Faith, therefore, is the spring and support of all true obedience.

Such is the service which you owe to God. The entire consecration of yourself, and all that you possess to him. It must be sincere, cheerful, and constant: not the constrained and reluctant service of a slave, but the willing and delightful offering of a child. This is the service to which I would now urge you, the service pressed upon the heart of the youthful king of Israel in the words already quoted, but worthy to be repeated and to be engraven upon the mind of every descendant of pious parents. "Know thou the God of thy father and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind, for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts; if thou seek him he will be found of thee, but if thou forsake him he will cast thee off forever."

## LETTER III.

## GENERAL OBLIGATIONS.

My Young Friends :—

In the preceding letter, I gave you a brief outline of your duty to your heavenly Father. In other words, I endeavored to show you what that religion is which the Bible enjoins, without which you cannot be sincere Christians, and cannot be saved.

In the present letter I shall dwell upon the obligations which bind you, in common with all other children, to render this service to God.

1. It is his own requirement. You cannot withhold it without open and deliberate disobedience to his command.

It is a fearful thing to disobey God, that great and glorious Being, who sits upon the throne of the universe. His right to

govern, none can dispute. The world and all its inhabitants are his; for he made and he sustains them. No other being is capable of governing the world. His government is infinitely righteous, His laws are "holy, just, and good." You came into being under his government, and from it you can never escape.

You must therefore serve and glorify God, or lift the standard of revolt against that holy and exalted Being whom angels adore, whose favor is life, and whose frown is death.

You cannot refuse to love and serve him without violating the most sacred ties and disregarding the most solemn obligations. He is your Creator. All your powers of mind and body are the product of his infinite skill and goodness. He is your Preserver. The same power which created you, holds you in existence every moment. Should God for one moment withdraw his hand, instant annihilation would result. He is your Benefactor. The life which he has given you he has crowned with his

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goodness. Every day, every hour, every moment of your existence, thus far in life, has been marked with some instance of his love. Health, shelter, food, raiment, home, friends, are all his gifts. And how freely, liberally, and constantly, have they been bestowed on you. God is your Redeemer. He saw you condemned, ruined and lost, and he provided a ransom for you. He gave his Son, the brightness of his glory—to endure the shame and suffering of the cross, that he might open to you the way to heaven; that he might save you from endless woe, and raise you to pure and endless bliss.

How sacred are the obligations which those relations create. No earthly parent can have such claims upon you, nor can so righteously command you. You ought to shudder at the thought of having any other object of life; of forming any other plan, or pursuing any other course, but that which God approves and enjoins. How ungrateful will you be, how regardless of all that is just and right and becoming, if

you do not make God the object of your supreme love, and his glory the end of your existence.

2. He who commands, is infinitely worthy of this entire consecration to him. No language can speak his greatness and excellence. Angels, who dwell in his presence and have the clearest views of his glory, are far from comprehending him. They behold him with astonishment, admiration and praise, and exclaim,—“Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever.”

You have seen, among your fellow men, many whose loveliness has won your admiration,—your own dear parents, perhaps, by their varied excellences, command your warm affection and esteem. But all that is good in them is but a spark of divine goodness. If all the loveliness of creatures—of angels and men—of all that have been or ever shall be, were combined, it would be but a feeble ray of the purity and excellence of God. His holiness is

without a stain, his benevolence pure and disinterested, his justice impartial, his mercy tender, and all as infinite and unchanging as his being.

How unseemly, how base, how wicked would it be for you to be indifferent to the honor and interests of your parents, much more to speak reproachfully of them; especially if they are such parents as I suppose them to be, kind, affectionate and pious. How becoming, how lovely, how proper in a child that has a kind, upright and benevolent father, to be ever speaking his praises, and ever trying to please him. How much more then is it your duty, and honor, and ought to be your delight, to serve and glorify your Father in heaven.

3. This is evidently, the great purpose for which you were made. God has endowed you with an intelligent and moral nature. He has made you capable of knowing, loving, serving, and enjoying himself. As you look over his works of beauty and grandeur, and mark the wisdom of their design and the harmony of

their movements; as you contemplate the stores of his bounty and taste the blessings of his goodness; you can trace them all up to their Divine author. In communion with him, and in doing his will, you may find the purest of all pleasures. Nothing else can make you so happy. You cannot be truly happy without him, as the object of your love and confidence, and as the Sovereign of your hearts.

You have also a conscience to remind you of your duty; to reproach you when you neglect it, and to forewarn you of approaching danger,

Why has God thus distinguished you? why bestowed upon you such high powers and noble capacities?—How evidently were you made to glorify and enjoy him. To serve him on earth and to dwell with him forever. If you refuse or neglect to love and serve him, you fail to fulfill the end of your existence. Like the barren tree, which has branches and leaves, but no fruit, you are worthless in the sight of God; a cum-

berer of the ground, and fit only to be cut down and destroyed.

Your whole eternal well-being, therefore, depends upon obedience to God. If thou forsake him he will cast thee off forever. Devote yourselves to his service, and you will have present peace, in the approving voice of conscience, in the smile of his favor, in the pureness of your affections, in the nobleness of your aims, and in the hope of eternal life. Nor shall your hope be vain. He "will make an everlasting covenant with you." He will be your guide and your defence through life, your support in death, and your "exceeding great and everlasting reward." He will crown you with immortal honor, and raise you to seats of glory at his right hand. He will make you companions of angels, and admit you to endearing, enrapturing, and endless fellowship with himself. Your capacities, ever-growing, he will fill with the purest happiness, which like a river shall flow on uninterrupted, ceaseless, and eternal.

O, will you not then consecrate your-

selves to his service, now in the morning of your days; and henceforth make it the business of your life to glorify him? Let this object ever be held up before you. It will elevate and ennoble your character. It will rapidly prepare you for your home in the heavens. You will grow more and more like God, till at length you shall be made perfect in his image.

It will sweeten every earthly joy, and elevate every lawful, worldly employment. What a dignity and importance will it give to life. How many sources of pain and dissatisfaction will it remove,—what a bright radiance will it pour over your whole existence on earth, terminating at length in the “exceeding great and eternal weight of glory.”

O, then resolve at once, depending on Divine grace to help you, that this shall be the business of all your future days—that from this time forth your “chief end” shall be, “to glorify God and enjoy him forever.”

## LETTER IV.

## BAPTISMAL OBLIGATIONS.

My Dear Young Friends:—

These letters, I may suppose, will be read by many who have been given up by their pious parents to God in baptism. 'This was esteemed by our puritan fathers so sacred a duty, and so rich a privilege, that few dared or desired to omit it. There are still many Christian parents who hold the faith of their ancestors—who delight to bring their infant offspring to the house of God and there dedicate them to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Perhaps you were thus given up. Memorable act! Full of interest, full of hope and promise! Full of responsibility too.

You might not have been conscious of what was passing. Like many other acts of kindness done for you by your parents, it might have been all a mystery to you;

beyond the comprehension of your infant mind. And perhaps you have thought little of it since; possibly you may have treated the whole subject with lightness.

But, my young friends, that act of your parents has brought you under very solemn obligations to be the Lord's. They gave you to him to be his servants, to employ all your powers through the whole duration of your being in the promotion of his glory. They bound you by the most sacred ties. They covenanted with the Lord on your behalf that you should serve him, pledging all their authority, love, and influence, to see the bond fulfilled. You are then the Lord's. He lays his claim upon you and requires that you own his right and live only to do his will.

Your parents had a right thus to bind you. Parents sometimes bind their children to their fellow men. Perhaps they are poor and unable to provide for all their children as they could wish. Some kind-hearted friend offers to take a part of them into his own family, to educate, feed and

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clothe them, and supply all their wants; the only condition being that they shall submit to his authority and faithfully promote his interests. This the father, in behalf of his children, agrees that they shall do. Is it not right? what cause have those children to complain?

Thus your parents have bound you to God. And who shall dare say it is not right.

They have bound you only to a most righteous service. To love and obey God would have been your duty had no such bonds been cast around you. You are God's by creation. All your powers belong to him and you have no right to employ them except to promote his interests and glory. To use them for any other purpose is robbing God of his due. You cannot neglect his service without fearful guilt.

You also belong to God by covenant relation. The covenant which God made with Abraham included his seed. And this covenant the apostle teaches us is still in force. God now says to all his believing

people, "Walk before me and be thou perfect, and I will make an everlasting covenant with thee, to be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee." Abraham was required to put the seal of the covenant upon his children. So are believers now. Your parents did this for you in token of their gratitude for God's condescending goodness, of his right to you, and your obligation to be his willing servants.

It was right, because it was the best thing they could do for you. They knew the dangers to which you would be exposed; they felt their own insufficiency to protect you and provide for you. They wished therefore to place you under the care and guidance of one who has infinite wisdom and power, and one who had graciously offered to receive you into his house and be your Father and God. Had they not a right to bind you to serve such a Being? Yes, they not only had the right, but it was their duty to do it. They could not refuse to do it without a breach of covenant and without a most criminal disre-

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gard of your welfare. Had they refused to do it they would virtually have renounced all interest in that blessed covenant and renounced all its obligations. They would have brought guilt upon their souls, and in all probability judgments upon their children. They would have fearfully hazarded your salvation. They dared not therefore refuse.

With deep solicitude and humble faith and hope they took you to the house of God, acknowledged his claims, embraced his covenant, gave you up to him and caused the seal of the covenant to be put upon you; and there it remains, binding your soul with cords which you cannot break without fearful guilt and peril.

O, how sacred the bond that binds you to the service of Jehovah !

Consider *to whom* this bond is given.—How great, how holy, how good, is that God to whom your parents have bound you, how able abundantly to protect and bless his servants. And as willing as he is able. See how in robes of light and beau-

ty he has spread his goodness over creation. How faithful he has ever been to his promises. "He has ever been mindful of his covenant." How great has been his kindness to you,—not only in creating you with all your powers and capacities, not only in preserving you in being and filling your cup with his bounties, not only in providing a Saviour and revealing his grace in the gospel, but in giving you christian parents and in bringing you within the inclosure of his blessed covenant.

And how *reasonable the service* to which they have bound you. It is not a hard and oppressive bondage. O no, his "yoke is easy" and his "burden is light." His service includes only that which is essential to your own happiness. It is itself happiness. It is the flowing out of the purest affections to the noblest objects. It is the promotion of the most glorious interests. It is attended with no remorse, results in no sorrow. It is rest, peace, joy,

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life. It is "to glorify God and enjoy him forever."

Do you wish to break away from such a service? Is the bond onerous? Do you wish to cast it from you? How can you do it without unspeakable sin?

Consider, *by whom* it was cast around you. By your parents, the tenderest and best friends you have on earth. They love you with a fullness and strength of which, as yet, you faintly conceive. They have authority too, the most righteous and absolute ever committed to mortals. They stand in God's stead, to enforce his commands and to assert his claims upon you. And they are bound to use their authority so as best to promote your good and the glory of God. In the discharge of their duty they gave you up to God. They sought at once to please him and to promote your welfare. They knew of nothing better that they could do for you. They sought your present happiness and they longed for your final salvation. They felt that something must be done early. They

knew the evil tendencies of your nature, and the dangers to which you would be exposed, and they wished to bespeak the protection and favor of God at the very commencement of your existence. They did what they could. O, with what unutterable yearnings of soul did they bear you to the sanctuary, with what fervent prayer did they entreat the God of mercy to accept the offering, and bless you with his renewing grace.

Consider the *circumstances* too which saddened achedness to the bond. The offering was made in God's own house amidst his worshiping people, accompanied with prayer and praise. Your parents came forth before the altar of God, with their precious offering in their arms. His commissioned servant implored his blessing, and applied the sacred emblem, the seal of the covenant, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Angels were witnesses. The transaction was recorded in heaven. O, what a solemn hour was that. Can you ever treat light-

ly a bond made by such persons, in such circumstances, and for such an object?

Consider further, your baptism has brought you into *close connection with the church*. The Great Shepherd of Israel has placed you under the care and guardianship of his people. He has required them to watch over you, to pray for you, and earnestly to seek your good. You cannot think lightly of your baptism without treating with contempt these privileges, and despising the purest and noblest society which God has instituted on earth.

O, how fearful will be your guilt, if you thus despise your birthright! What a brand of infamy and woe will be upon you, if you break away from such restraints! O, what overwhelming wrath will fall upon you, what agonies rend your souls, if you refuse to be the servants of God.

But if you "seek him, he will be found" of you. With peculiar readiness he will welcome you to his embrace. His heart, his arms are open to receive you. O, will you not go to him? will you not from this

time say unto him, "My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?" Own his right to you, give yourselves away to him, freely ratify the engagement of your parents: sweet will be the present result, and through all eternity you will bless the sacred bond.

## LETTER V.

PECULIAR ADVANTAGES OF THE CHILDREN  
OF PIOUS PARENTS.

My Young Friends :—

You are not only by your baptism brought under obligations peculiarly strong, but, as the children of pious parents you enjoy special advantages for securing the character and blessings of piety. And these again go to swell your responsibilities.

1. Your opportunities for acquiring *religious instruction* are peculiar. If your parents are faithful, as I trust they are, no other class of persons in the world are so favorably situated in this respect as you are. Your parents are so constantly with you, and have such direct access to your minds that they cannot only give you stated instruction from time to time, but

can improve occasions, seize upon favorable opportunities, and engraft upon the passing wants of every day important lessons of heavenly truth. They know you better than any other persons, and can adapt their instructions to your peculiar traits and habits of mind. They have doubtless begun early; and as far back as your memory can reach, you have been familiar with the great truths of the Bible. The character of God, your relations and accountability to him, his perfect law, your own sinful character and lost condition, the wonderful love of God in sending his Son to die for your sins, the way of salvation through him, the nature and obligations of repentance, faith, love, and every Christian grace and duty, have doubtless all been explained to you again and again.

How many have never had such instruction. What millions of children are taught to worship wood and stone—horrid images that can neither hear nor save. How many in Christian lands, who receive no pious instruction from their parents.

What multitudes have their minds filled with pernicious error.

No teaching of the pulpit or of the Sabbath school should be regarded as a substitute for the instruction of the fire-side. These are indeed of incalculable value. To multitudes they are the only means of grace. Thousands who have had no pious parents, will bless God forever for the Sabbath school. They have there been taught the way of life, and have "found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write."

But in addition to these you have "line upon line, and precept upon precept," from lips of sweet paternal love. Now if the heathen, who have only the light of nature to guide them, are without excuse, how great must be your condemnation, if you do not repent,—if you love darkness rather than light!

You have not only instruction, but *admonitions*. Not only is truth presented to your mind, but duty is pressed home upon your heart. With a tender concern which

no one else can feel, your parents exhort, urge and entreat you to flee from the wrath to come, and lay hold on eternal life.

They have set before you the most tender and melting motives that earth or heaven supplies, that they might win you by love. They have watched over you with great solicitude, endeavoring to guard you from danger and restrain you from the paths that lead to death. They have re-proved, warned, and perhaps corrected you, according to the authority which God has given them. You have sometimes, possibly, thought them too strict, and even superstitious. But they loved your souls. They could not endure the thought of your being lost. They would take you, if possible, along with them to heaven.

You have had the further advantage of *pious example*. The precepts which have been so often inculcated from the lips, have been drawn out in the life; thus giving a clearer view of their nature, and a deeper impression of their excellence. You have seen how religion could curb and subdue

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the passions, purify the heart, and give a loveliness to the whole character; how it could support and cheer the soul in seasons of affliction, and open a fountain of purest happiness, when all other sources fail.

What an advantage is this! how many unhappy children have been led down to ruin, by the example of ungodly parents. We do not wonder that such children are lost. It might be expected they would be lost. But how dreadful if you should fail of heaven! What hardened impiety will it show, what desperate wickedness, if you "turn away from the holy commandment delivered unto you," and pressed upon you by the persuasive power of living example!

Again, you have been made the *subjects of prayer*. Your parents, not content with showing you the way to heaven, and urging you to enter it, have gone to him who holds your destiny in his hands. They have besought his aid. They have prayed for his Spirit to second their efforts, and make the truth effectual for your salvation. Think what a blessing it is to have such parents.

They have perhaps been praying for you ever since you came into being. Every day they have sought blessings upon you from heaven. What peculiar hardihood would it evince, if, after all this, you should refuse to give yourselves to God,—if it should appear that while your parents have been praying, you have been sinning,—boldly trampling upon the laws of God, and turning away from his reproofs. While they have been shedding tears of grief over you in their closets, you have been plotting schemes of iniquity.

But I hope better things of you, though I thus speak. I wish to show you how awful would be your guilt, if it should be so. You may expect *peculiar aids* if you commence a life of piety. Instead of ridicule and opposition, your parents would rejoice to see you turning your feet unto God's testimonies. They would encourage every pious feeling and purpose. They would aid your inquiries after truth. They would gladly give you opportunity to enjoy the best means of grace. They would pray

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for you, and with you. They would help you to struggle against sin, and to overcome temptation.

How blessed is your condition! How favorable for the great work to which God calls you. How utterly inexcusable will you be if you do not improve it. I wish you my dear friends to know, that, in all the respects which I have named, your circumstances are altogether peculiar. They are such as are enjoyed by few in this world. The vast majority of children have no pious parents; God has greatly distinguished you. His kindness towards you is wonderful,—O, let it melt your hearts. Yield yourselves to be drawn by cords of love. I cannot but hope you will, and that parents who have wept with so much solicitude may have occasion to say, with overflowing gratitude and joy, “This my son, my daughter, was dead, but is alive again, was lost, but is found.”

## LETTER VI.

## DUTY OF EARLY PIETY.

My Dear Young Friends:—

You will perhaps acknowledge the truth of what I have said in the preceding letter. How can you, children of pious parents, who have heard so much about the truth and importance of religion, and who have seen it so beautifully exemplified, for a moment doubt the importance and duty of loving and serving God. No, you do not doubt. You know that religion is necessary. You do not mean to die without it. The thought of an eternal separation from your parents would be dreadful. The anticipation of the woes of the second death would fill you with the deepest distress. You mean, therefore, to be Christians. If you are not now, you hope to be at some future time. You intend to begin the great

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work of repentance in earnest; but you are not quite ready *now*. Perhaps the reader whose eye is now passing along these lines, says, "I am too young. Some ten or fifteen years hence, when I shall have passed through the gay and merry season of youth, I will attend to the sober work of religion. It is not suitable to my present age; it wears an aspect too solemn and melancholy, it would frown away all my pleasures, and draw a cloud of deep gloom over my path. I will enjoy the world while I can; and when I can no more taste its pleasures, I will begin to think of God and eternity."

But has God given you permission to put off this great work till a more convenient season? Does *he* think you are too young? Hear what he says: "Remember *now* thy Creator in the days of thy youth." "*Now* is the accepted time, *now* is the day of salvation." "*To-day*, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. Come ye children, hearken unto me, and I will teach you the fear of the Lord. Children obey your parents in the Lord."

Are not these commands and exhortations directed to *you*? Does not God address you when he says, “Remember now *thy* Creator in the days of *thy* youth?”

“Too young!” O no. God does not think you are too young. There has never been any moment of your life since you could understand his words, when he did not say to you, “My son, or my daughter, give me thy heart.” If you have neglected it to the present time, you have neglected it too long, you have been living all your days in disobedience to his commands. And what a fearful amount of guilt have you already contracted.

You cannot plead in extenuation of your sin that religion is above your capacities,—that you cannot understand its doctrines, or perform its duties. There are many things about religion that I do not suppose you can understand. Some that you never will be able to comprehend. But there is enough that is plain,—so plain that a child can understand it.

Do you not know that there is a God,

who made you, and who commands you to love and serve him? Do you not know that you have failed to fulfill his commands,—that you have sinned against him, and that he now requires you to repent? Do you not know that Jesus Christ came into this world to save sinners, and that whosoever believeth on him shall not perish, but have everlasting life? Do you not know what it is to repent and believe? I can hardly suppose that any children of pious parents who can read these lines, are ignorant of these first principles of religion. But if you are, how easily can you ask your parents for instruction, and they will gladly explain them all to you, so far at least, as may be necessary for your salvation.

Nor are the *duties* of religion beyond your powers. It is a difficult thing for a sinner of any age to forsake his sins; but no more difficult, certainly, for a young sinner than for one who has grown old in transgression,—whose habits of sin have become confirmed by years of indulgence. It is very humiliating for a sinner to re-

nounce all self-righteousness, and trust in the Lord Jesus alone for salvation; but no more so for a child than for a man of years. You can as easily *love* the Lord your God now, as at any future time. All his commands can be as easily kept, as in any future period of life. Indeed as far as power is required, it is vastly easier for you to become a Christian now, than it will be hereafter. But the truth is, that at any age, such is the depravity of the heart, you need the aid of the Holy Spirit; "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

The Holy Spirit is able and willing to help you, if you really desire to be a Christian. He can enlighten your mind so that you shall perceive "spiritual things as they are spiritually discerned." He can strengthen you to resist temptation, and enable you to subdue every unholy feeling. He can shed abroad the love of God in your heart; and can keep you from falling.

And will he not thus aid you? Your dear parents would not refuse you bread,

when hungry, should you ask them in a becoming manner. They love you too well to mock your hunger with a stone; much less would they offer you a serpent, or a scorpion. With all their imperfections they “know how to give good things unto their children;” and they delight to do it. “How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.” Yes, God is willing to help you. How tenderly he invites you to come to him and ask every blessing that you need. How graciously he promises,—“If thou seek him, he will be found of thee.” “I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me. Turn you at my reproof. I will pour out my Spirit upon you; I will make known my words unto you.”

Be assured then, my young friends, that there is no impossibility of your becoming Christians *now*. How many delightful instances of early piety do we find recorded. Such were Moses, Samuel, Josiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and John the Baptist. Such

too, in later times were Nathan Dickerman, John Mooney Mead, Mary Lothrop, Anne Thane Peck, and many others, whose beautiful memoirs you have doubtless read. Why may not you be pious as well as they? Ought you not to be? Will you not be? Religion opens the only true source of happiness.

3. I have no doubt your conscience tells you that you ought to give your heart to God *now*. But the heart pleads for delay. You do not wish to give up sinful pleasures. The world is too beautiful, and holds out too many promises of happiness to be relinquished for the doubtful joys, and sober life of religion. Such at least, I fear are the thoughts of some of my readers. Alas! you have not yet learned the deceitfulness of the world. Will you not believe those who have tried it? What says the experience of all ages? "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." O, how many aching hearts, broken spirits, and early deaths have sealed this testimony! The cup of worldly pleasure is soon drained, and the joys that so

sparkle and allure, are found to be deeply tinctured with the poison of grief and remorse. At the very best they cannot satisfy the soul. When they have expended their utmost power, they leave the heart a prey to disappointed hope.

And why will you not believe those who have tried religion? Can you not place confidence in Christians? In those whose lives are adorned with every virtue and every excellence? How many such tell you that religion is the only true source of happiness. Some of them tell you they have tried every other, and never knew happiness till they found it in the service of God. Do not your beloved parents bear the same testimony to its excellence? Would they deceive you?

O no, religion is not that dark, gloomy, joyless thing which you think it is. It is like the clear bright sun, breaking in upon the darkness of night, spreading light, beauty and cheerfulness over every scene of life. It frowns upon none of the innocent joys of life. It forbids such only as are

sinful, and injurious; and such as lead ultimately to pain and wretchedness. It is not unsuited to your age. It represses none of the buoyant feelings of youth. It only directs them to their proper objects, and opens for them pure and healthful channels. It gives free scope to all the ardor and energy of youth, and spreads out the noblest fields for their enterprise. It is beautiful in all its aspects, and in every age, but most beautiful in youth and childhood.

What can be more lovely than the glowing love, the generous ardor, the sweet simplicity, the unsuspecting confidence of youthful piety?

There is now no reason therefore, that conscience will approve, or God accept, why you should not give the very morning of your days, and the earliest warmth of your affections to God. Will you not do it? Resolve at once that you will return to your Father's house, and that all your future days shall be devoted to him. In all the fullness of his love, he waits to receive

you, and bestow upon you all the honors and privileges of children. He will forgive your sins. He will send his Spirit upon you to teach, to guide, to sanctify and comfort you. He will make you heirs to a glorious and incorruptible inheritance. Go then, immediately, and taste the joys which earth cannot give, and of which none can ever deprive you.

LETTER VII.

THE BLESSINGS OF EARLY PIETY.

My Young Friends,

Religion is always a blessing of unspeakable value. It richly repays the man of years for every sacrifice that he may be called to make in obtaining it. But all its precious fruits are gathered by those only who embrace it while young.

1. It is invaluable as a preservative from the temptations and dangers of the world.

Any thing is a temptation that presents a strong inducement to do wrong. Our world is full of temptations. Pleasures that cannot be innocently enjoyed; objects of attachment which cannot be loved without sin; enterprises of gain that involve the transgression of some divine law, are con-

tinually making strong appeals to appetite and inclination. Occasions are constantly occurring which are calculated to arouse the baser passions. The allurements are sometimes very strong. The beauties of painting, the melody of music, the sprightliness of wit, the enchantment of poetry and eloquence, the splendors of wealth, the garlands of honor, the sweets of friendship, the example of companions, the warmth of passion, the exhilarations of society, all that can excite the imagination, or move the heart, throw their fascinations around the forbidden pleasure, to heighten its charms, to conceal its guilt, and to blind the mind to its consequences. An *angel* confirmed in holiness, might resist them all. But what shall preserve the frail children of men, whose passions and appetites have become so irregular and inordinate by the fall? How many, alas, are taken in the snare! They yield to the temptation, are gradually drawn deeper and deeper into sin, till character, reputation, health, property, all are gone; body and soul wrecked,

heaven lost, and remorse, agony, and death are the sad and eternal inheritance.

What shall prevent this direful result? One thing only is infallible,—*early piety*. Without this there is nothing strong enough to keep the soul. Appetite, passion, inclination will break through every other influence that may be cast around it.

If any, by the wonderful grace of God, do become pious late in life, they can never eradicate, entirely, early habits of sin. “Their bones are full of the sin of their youth.” And many of the sad effects of former transgression will go with them to the grave. O how much mortification and anguish would be saved to such persons, had they embraced religion young.

But by far the greater portion of those who defer repentance beyond the season of youth, are entangled in the meshes of temptation, and lost forever. Not a few are ruined for this world. Early piety would have preserved them.

Religion destroys, or greatly abates the desire for sinful pleasures. It opens in the

soul a spring of far purer, richer, deeper happiness than any which sin can offer. In the love and service of God, in the consciousness of his favor, in reading the Scriptures, in prayer and praise, in Christian fellowship, in doing good, in the voice of an approving conscience, and in the hope of eternal life, the youthful Christian finds a joy which makes all the pleasures of sin distasteful and disgusting. Just in proportion as he experiences the power of religion, will he disrelish all forbidden and dangerous enjoyments. It will bring him into relations, and throw around him influences which will tend greatly to preserve him from danger. His associates will naturally be the pious; he will avoid ensnaring connections; he will place himself under the watchful care of the church; he will bind himself by sacred vows. Thus he will be kept away from many of the scenes of temptation, or if exposed to them, bound as he is, in honor, conscience, truth and duty to resist them, he will obtain the victory.

Early piety implants in the soul the fear of God, the most powerful of all restraining and controlling principles. Not the fear of a slave, which only dreads the lash, but the reverential awe, that fears to offend.

The pious youth remembers that God is ever near; that his eyes are in every place, and that he is displeased with every sin. He dreads the displeasure of God more than the loss of any earthly pleasure. Any pleasure that must be purchased at the expense of a good conscience, or that cannot be enjoyed without offending God, loses all its charms, and awakens only alarm and apprehension. So felt the youthful Joseph, and nobly did he resist temptation, saying, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

Early piety will give an independence, and decision to the mind, which will enable it to triumph over temptation. Numbers, rank, wealth, and power, on the side of evil, will weigh but little with the mind that is in communion with God, and habitually conscious of his presence.

Look at Daniel and his companions upon the plains of Dura. Nebuchadnezzar had set up a golden image, and commanded all people, nations and languages, to bow down and worship it. Daniel and his three companions, alone, refused. The penalty was fearful. They were to be cast into the burning fiery furnace. But they were unyielding. The burning fiery furnace had not such terrors for them as the displeasure of God.

“Nor numbers, nor example with them wrought
To swerve from truth, nor change their constant minds.”

Similar was the triumph of Daniel, when the terrors of the lions' den were held out to deter him from praying to his God.

Early piety will secure the protection of God. “Take heed,” said the Saviour, “that ye offend not one of these little ones, for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father.”

Angels, those ever wakeful beings, are “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for

them who shall be heirs of salvation;" "who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation." Concerning his own people,—young disciples in a peculiar manner,—God says, "There hath no temptation happened to you but such as is common to man; God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above what ye are able, but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

If you now commence his service, a mysterious providence will so guard you, so arrange the circumstances of your being, and influence your minds, that you will abundantly experience the truth of that declaration, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation."

Trace the history of two young persons, the one pious, and the other not, as they pass along amid the temptations of the world; and to make the case stronger, let them go from the healthful influences of the country, into all the ensnaring scenes of the city.

Let one be James B. Taylor. With the love and fear of God in his heart, what to this lovely youth, were the attractions of theatres, ball-rooms, gaming-tables, sparkling cups, merry circles, and all the haunts of dissipation! He could say, with holy indifference to all the vain pleasures of earth,—

“Its fading charms no longer please,
No more content afford,
Far from my heart be joys like these,
Now I have seen the Lord.”

In the devout exercises of the closet, in the Sabbath school, the prayer-meeting and the sanctuary, in the pious sympathies and sweet intercourse of Christian friendship, and in benevolent efforts, he found a happiness, kindred to the pure joys of angels, and compared with which, the pleasures of the world were all insipid and vain. I knew him well, at that period, and shall never forget the glowing animation of his countenance, the soft and sweet expression of his eye, when Jesus and salvation were

the themes of his discourse, as they almost uniformly were.

How easily could this devoted youth pass around among the enticing gayeties, the fashionable follies, the alluring dangers of New York, unharmed by their poisonous influence, unseduced by their charms. Steadily he holds on his way, till in early maturity, his Master calls him home.

Take another case. E. R. is a young man, amiable, lovely, of unblemished character, but destitute of piety. He is put into a store in New York, as youngest clerk. He soon becomes acquainted with other young men, already initiated in the mysteries of wicked pleasures, as they abound in the city. With apparent kindness he is invited to the festive saloon, is solicited to join in a game of cards, or billiards, to take a glass of wine. At first he hesitates. Thoughts of home and friends come over him; vague apprehensions of danger hold him in check; dim visions of poverty, disgrace and ruin flit before his mind. But he has no settled principles of

piety, no religious ties, no binding vows, no higher source of joy. Every thing is new, splendid, enticing. The fires of unholy desire begin to enkindle within. His companions urge, deride his conscientious scruples and prudent fears. The feeble voice of conscience is soon hushed, and with adventurous, yet trembling hand, he reaches forth and takes the cup of pleasure. Intoxicated, bewildered by its maddening influence, he yields himself to the current that bears him on through all the successive stages of gaming, drunkenness, adultery, murder.

Substantially, this is the faithful picture of thousands of young men who enter upon the stage of life, without piety.

Sad, too, were the recital of many daughters, sent forth into the world, without the restraining power of religion. O, how many such, forsaking the guide of their youth, have made shipwreck of virtue and hope, plunged into the vortex of dissipation, and early sunk into the deeper gulph of endless perdition.

What youth is safe, in such a world as

this, without the principles of piety deeply implanted in the heart, and the sheltering care of a covenant God. Dare not, my young friends, to trust yourselves upon this treacherous sea, without the guidance and protection of the heavenly Pilot. Commit yourselves to his care, rely upon his word, trust in his arm. Then, and then only, will you be safe.

2. Early piety is highly desirable, viewed in its bearing upon usefulness. You surely do not wish to live only for yourselves, contracting all your desires, purposes and efforts, within the narrow circle of selfish enjoyment. You were made to do good. Your noble powers never find their appropriate employment till occupied in works of benevolence. This is the business and blessedness of Jehovah. In this angels delight; and Christians, in proportion as they have the spirit of their Master, long to do good.

But those who become pious late in life, find they have not only lost much time, but in a good measure lost the power of usefulness. They have neglected to cultivate

the talents, to form the habits, and secure the knowledge, which are needed for the work. They have not the facility of expression, the readiness of action, nor the influence which a life of piety would have given them. They have formed connections, acquired habits, or made arrangements, which greatly hinder their usefulness.

Let the principles of piety be implanted in your hearts *now*, and you can adopt all your plans for life, in reference to this great object. Your studies and labors may be so directed, as to strengthen your benevolent feelings, enlarge your field of action, and increase your power of usefulness.

What a bright and glorious career would then open before you. O, how delightful to pass along through life, amidst the blessings of the widow and the fatherless, to witness the happiness of those who have been saved through your instrumentality, and to know that hundreds will cherish your name with the warmest gratitude, long after you are dead. But sweeter still,

to know that you have done much to advance the glory of God, and that some immortal spirits, through your instrumentality, will drink the pure joys of heaven forever.

3. I urge you to commence the service of God early, that if it please him to spare you, you may have a long life of happiness. I have already spoken of the happiness which true piety confers. How desirable that it should be enjoyed through the whole of life. Why should any one be willing to lose it for a single year? "O, satisfy us early with thy mercy," said a good man of old, "that we may *be glad and rejoice all our days.*" Early piety, while it is in its direct influences delightful, will save you from a thousand sources of trouble and misery, and will open to you sources of enjoyment, to which nothing else will conduct you. "Godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." O! what an amount of pure enjoyment might you realize, even on earth, if you would now give yourselves up to God, and spend your days in his service!

your path would be cheered by the light of heaven, "shining more and more unto the perfect day."

4. You need early piety as a preparation for death. I have hitherto supposed that you might live to old age. But this is by no means certain. Human life is very frail;—"a vapor that appeareth for a little while and then vanisheth away." Diseases and accidents are ever near to destroy it. You have no promise that yours will be spared; many others as young as yourselves have died. Some of your own companions, doubtless, who began life with you, are now in eternity. And, beyond all question many others will die young. I have no doubt that many who will read these lines, will be called early to their final account. You, reader, may be of the number. Are you ready? Have you given your heart to God? Have you laid up treasure in heaven? O, how momentous are these questions! How melancholy, how hopeless would be your condition, if summoned into the presence of God, with all your sins unrepented of and

unforgiven. There is no place for repentance beyond the narrow limits of this short life.

“There are no acts of pardon past,
In the cold grave to which we haste;
But darkness, death, and long despair
Reign in eternal silence there.”

O, how unsafe to presume on a future more convenient season, to secure the salvation of the soul. “Thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.”

Said a young lady in P., when urged to attend to the interests of her soul, “I am too young, I wish to enjoy the world a little longer.” But God smote her with disease, and a few days after this declaration, the writer of these letters attended her funeral.

Every thing calls upon you to improve the present time—“My spirit,” says God, “shall not always strive with man.” “He that being often reprovèd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.” O, then, “to-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.”

LETTER VIII.

OBLIGATION TO PARENTS.

My Dear Young Friends :—

Your first and highest obligations are to God. He is the author of your being, and the source of all your blessings. All that can contribute to your happiness must come from him. To him you are indebted, even for your parents, and for all the good you have ever received through them.

But, while this is freely admitted, and urged, you owe to your parents as the instruments of divine goodness, a debt of gratitude which you can never pay. How much have they suffered for you! How much have they done for you! What anxious days and sleepless nights have they passed, deeply pondering your circumstances, your character, and your ne-

cessities, planning for your welfare, praying for your preservation from surrounding dangers, for the renewal of your nature and the salvation of your soul. What self-denial and sacrifices have they endured for your benefit. How long and how tenderly have they borne with your faults, always hoping for the best and laboring against all opposing difficulties and discouragements, to bring you up for honor, usefulness, and happiness. With what changeless love, and untiring assiduity, from the first day of your being, have they cared and labored for your good; desiring as their richest reward, to see you prosperous, virtuous, pious, happy: and is not something due to such kindness? If it had not been so lavished upon you, still, as your parents, next to God, they ought to be the objects of your chief regard. To please them, to soothe their care-worn spirits, to lighten their burdens, to promote their happiness, should be your earnest, constant wish; no offering can be more acceptable to God than this. He has therefore, expressly enjoined it. It is written

among the fundamental, unchangeable laws of his kingdom, "Honor thy father and thy mother."

While, therefore, I have urged upon you a life of piety from your obligations to God, and from regard to your own safety and happiness, it is not out of place to mention your obligations to your parents. In no other way can you so certainly and greatly honor them and promote their happiness, as by a life of piety. Give yourselves to God, make his service your business and delight, and their highest wishes concerning you are accomplished. You will thus pour into their hearts a tide of joy which in purity, and richness, nothing short of their own salvation can give.

They think of the blessedness which religion will confer upon yourselves. Let them see the evidences of your piety, and look upon you, not as their children merely, but as the children of God, under his care and protection, sharing the blessings of his household and heirs of immortal

glory. Saved from the pollution, remorse, and endless ruin of sin, they contemplate you as the future companions of angels, glowing in the image of God, and admitted to his glorious fellowship and blessed presence.

They are happy in the new bond which has been created between you and them. The new character which you have acquired, the new sympathies which have been awakened in your hearts, the new views, tastes, and feelings which mark the work of the Spirit of God, make you more than ever the objects of their love. They are bound to you, not merely as members of their own family, but as members of the household of faith. Your society becomes doubly endeared.

They are happy that God, their own God, should be honored by their own children, that "eyes so dear," should behold the glory which *they* see in the Lord their Redeemer, that lips so dear should be engaged in his praises, and hearts so dear should be consecrated to his eternal adoration and love.

Many parents, after seeing their children brought thus to devote themselves to God, have felt like saying with Simeon, "Now Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

But who can tell the anguish of spirit felt by pious parents, in seeing their children growing up and entering upon the responsibilities of life, without the fear and love of God in their hearts. O, it is a deep corroding sorrow, which none but they who feel it know.

Wickedness, wherever seen, afflicts the pious heart. The righteous soul of Lot was vexed from day to day in beholding the ungodly deeds of the people of Sodom. David says: "I beheld the transgressors and was grieved. Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law." But most of all does it afflict the pious to see this wickedness in their own children. After having, with all the solicitude of paternal love, consecrated them to God, and with many prayers and

tears, endeavored to train them up for his service and glory, O, what bitter disappointment, to see them still despising his authority, and trifling with their own immortal interests. They could bear to see them poor, obscure, afflicted. But to see them the enemies of that God whom *they* love, and whom they know to be worthy of universal homage, love and praise, how it crushes the parental heart.

They know what must be the certain consequences to their children. "The wages of sin is death," and no exception will be made in favor of the children of pious parents who despise their birthright and live and die ungodly. The profane sons of Eli must perish with the enemies of God. Absalom dies as a fool dieth, leaving his weeping father to exclaim, "O, Absalom, my son, would God I had died for thee, O, Absalom, my son, my son!" The pious parent knows that his ungodly child can find no place in heaven, that he must be shut out from all its pure and sublime joys, and given over to the agonies of remorse, the rage of unholy passions, and

ungratified desires, the deep burning sense of divine wrath, and the horrors of despair, to everlasting weeping and gnashing of teeth. Can he look upon his children, on their way to such a sad inheritance, without the keenest anguish?

Remember this, my young friends, every sin which you commit, produces a pang in the bosom of your parents. Every sinful pleasure which you taste is gall and wormwood to them. Can you feel willing to pursue a course which so deeply wounds such dear friends? After all they have done, and suffered, for your happiness, have you the heart, deliberately to do that which you know must make them wretched?

But perhaps your parents are dead; gone to that rest where the wicked cease from troubling. The appeal then, is, if possible, still more tender. Hard indeed must be your hearts, if you can think of all their instructions, their pious example, their affectionate admonitions, their earnest prayers without emotion. Doubtless the last yearnings of solicitude that heaved their breasts,

were for you. Perhaps they called you to their bed-side, and gave you their parting counsels, and with their dying breath urged you to renounce your sins, and give your hearts to God. And have you done it? Or, neglecting to do it, are you troubled with no upbraidings of conscience? Can you enjoy one moment's peace while neglecting such sacred injunctions? Who knows but the sainted spirit of a departed parent may now be hovering over you, and with the feelings of an angel, desiring your salvation? O, what peculiar joy must it occasion to such a spirit to hear it announced in heaven, that a beloved child has become a penitent! Would you prevent that joy? Can you go on in sin with the full consciousness that you are failing to fulfill the first wish and the last prayer of your departed parents? How will you meet them in that day, when the thoughts of all hearts shall be revealed?

LETTER IX.

FEARFUL DOOM OF UNGODLY CHILDREN OF
PIOUS PARENTS.

FROM what I have already said you can easily see, my young friends, that if you refuse to yield to the claims of God, if you fail to become Christians, your guilt must be peculiarly great. It is a settled principle of the divine government, that, to whom much is given from them shall much be required. How great then must be your responsibility and how fearful your guilt, if you remain impenitent!

Even the heathen are inexcusable for not worshiping the true and living God. The light of nature shines with sufficient clearness to condemn their idolatry and all the base and brutal indulgences connected with it, "For that which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God hath

showed it them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead, so that they are without excuse."

The inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah had only the light of nature and tradition to guide them, yet for their sins they were overwhelmed with destruction, and "are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."

What, then, must be the guilt of sinners in a christian land, where God is so clearly revealed, where the claims of his law are published to all, where the provisions of the gospel and the invitations of grace are so constantly proclaimed, and all the motives to obedience that can be drawn from the character of God, the righteousness of his requirements, the blessedness of his favor, the love of Christ and the retributions of eternity are pressed home upon the heart.

The sinner who can shut his eye to this light and close his ear to these appeals, must accumulate a measure of guilt never

incurred by the inhabitants of heathen lands.

But you have not only enjoyed the privileges of a christian land, as the children of christian parents; you have had advantages given to no other class of persons. All the circumstances that can aggravate guilt meet in your case; the clearest light, the most favorable opportunities, the best facilities, the most powerful influences and the greatest encouragement. You cannot sin without knowing that you are trampling on the authority of God, you cannot refuse obedience without the most deliberate purpose and presumptuous hardihood—without rending the most sacred ties and resisting the most tender and melting influences, both human and divine, ever brought to bear upon the heart. There are no greater sinners on earth than the disobedient children of pious parents.

In proportion to your guilt must be your punishment. “He that knew his Lord’s will and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.” Your place, if you are lost,

must be the lowest in the pit of woe;—your sufferings the most intense of all the inhabitants of that dark abode.

This must be so from the nature of the case. You carry in your memories the stores of vengeance—materials of woe sufficient, were there no other, to make you completely wretched. It is believed that no idea once impressed upon the memory will ever be lost. How often even in this life, by leisure, retirement, or the recurrence of associated circumstances, are ideas, that seemed to be entirely lost, restored with all their original freshness. How certainly will this be the case when the leisure of eternity shall be given,—when all the diverting scenes of earth shall be removed, and the influence of a material body, clouding the mind, shall no longer be felt.

However much, therefore, you may wish it, you will never be able to efface from your minds the recollections of this life. Every scene and circumstance, every thought and feeling will be revived in the future world, with all the vividness of pres-

ent realities. If it were not so from the nature of the mind, God will surely bring all the past to remembrance. He has been perfectly acquainted with you from the beginning and he never forgets any thing. In his book all the circumstances and events of your life are written. And he will certainly cause you distinctly to remember them, for "God will bring into judgment every secret thing whether it be good or bad." And "every one shall give account of himself unto God." The past history of each individual shall rise up before his mind, so clear, so full, that not the minutest circumstance shall be forgotten. Yes, you will remember all. The events of your life are written upon the tablet of your mind as with the point of a diamond, never to be obliterated. And to those who live and die without God they will ever remain as the sources of intolerable woe. With what tremendous emphasis does Abraham, or rather the Lord Jesus, through him in a figure, say to the rich man, "Son,

remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things."

You will remember that you were the children of the covenant, descended from pious parents, and early consecrated to God; and thus brought into relations, and blessed with privileges, which distinguished you above millions of your race, and laid you under obligations to be the Lord's, the most sacred that ever bind the hearts of men. But these obligations were slighted, these privileges despised.

Every lesson of wisdom received from pious lips, every exhortation and entreaty and admonition, every prayer offered for you, every tear shed over you, will be distinctly remembered. The injunctions enforced by the righteous authority of a father, the melting tones, the tender looks, the flowing tears of a mother ever anxious for your welfare can never be forgotten. The books put into your hands, the scriptures and hymns which you were taught to repeat, the sources of domestic piety, the examples of patient suffering, of humble

trust, of holy obedience, perhaps the triumphant faith and heavenly joy of departing parents when called to their rest, all these will be ever present to the mind in the future world.

You will remember too how often the gracious Spirit, concurring with the voice of paternal love, strove with you, warned you of your danger and urged you to flee from the wrath to come. You had many moments of seriousness produced by these visitations. You thought on your ways. You felt that they were evil and dangerous. Sometimes you were almost persuaded to be christians. Perhaps you wept, you trembled, you prayed, but alas, you did not repent. Your goodness was as the early dew and the morning cloud; it passed away. Your heart became hard, and conscience became seared, till at length nothing could reach you. God called but you refused, he stretched out his hand but you did not regard it. You set at nought all his counsels and would none of his reproofs. Infinite motives were set before you, but

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you despised them. You urged your way through the strongest restraints ever cast around the children of men, down to perdition.

Can such reflections fail to produce the keenest anguish. What an overwhelming sense of guilt and folly! what stings of conscience, what pangs of remorse, what shame, and self-reproach must they occasion.

And when you look up and see how many others, once placed in similar circumstances with yourselves, have been saved, perhaps a brother, a sister, and your own dear parents, when you contemplate their glory and bliss,—as they stand before the throne of God, as they drink in the pure joys of heaven and pour forth their raptures in ceaseless praises, must not your agony be insupportable? And yet from it there is no relief. You cannot drown reflection, you cannot forget your misery.

But in addition to all this, God will doubtless send some special tokens of his wrath upon those whose guilt is so awful.

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“It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for you.” “These shall receive greater damnation,” said the Saviour to just such children of the covenant who had despised their birthright. God will, in a peculiar manner, show his displeasure and make known his power upon those who have abused such great blessings.

It is wrapt up in awful majesty under such figures as these, “everlasting fire, the bottomless pit,—the blackness of darkness forever.” But whatever it may be, and wherever it may be, we cannot doubt that the lowest place is reserved for the ungodly children of pious parents.

But I will dwell no longer on this dreadful theme. I have alluded to it only as a solemn and affectionate warning. “Knowing the terrors of the Lord,” I would “persuade you.” There is now a possibility of escaping these torments. The day of mediatorial grace is not yet closed. Still it pours its sweet and blessed light around you. The invitations of mercy are yet

addressed to you, "now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." O, can I not persuade you to embrace it before the dark curtain of everlasting night shall shut out all hope of salvation. How much better to give yourselves up to God, to follow the advice and example of your parents, to pursue with them, the path to heaven. Then how joyful will be the meeting. How rapturous the songs when parents and children, an unbroken circle, shall stand before the throne of God, wearing the golden crown and bearing the palms of victory.

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THE END.~~~~~

